



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Project Title and Code:				
LL-03 - U.S. Perception and Responses to Corruption in Afghanistan				
Interview Title:				
Interview with (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)				
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Location:				
New York, NY				
Purpose:				
To solicit views on corruption in Afghanistan, and particularly USG responses to corruption in the early years of the post-2001 intervention and during SRAP Holbrooke's tenure				
Interviewees: (Either list interviewees below, attach sign-in sheet to this document or hyperlink to a file)				
SIGAR Attendees:				
Scott Worden, Jim Wasserstrom, Kate Bateman, Matt Rubin				
Non- attribution Basis:	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Prepared By: (Name, title and date)				
Kate Bateman, Research Analyst, September 4, 2015				
Reviewed By: (Name, title and date)				
Key Topics:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corruption in Afghanistan – general narrative and analysis• Conflicting USG objectives• USG walk-back from anti-corruption push• USG contribution to corruption• Failure to reach political settlement• Impunity, transitional justice				



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Corruption in Afghanistan – general narrative/analysis of conflicting objectives

We had multiple objectives and if you're not getting into intelligence and top secret operations, then there will be serious limitations to your analysis. (b)(1) - 1.4(D)

When journalist James Risen gave Rumsfeld a report on this, he said, never give me a report like that again. If you can't get into that, you can't get to the real issues in terms of how corruption played out.

The problem of corruption is not a procedural problem. Nevertheless, in successive government reports, it gets reduced to a procedural problem. From the point of view of whether the US is achieving its objectives... If we're trying to economically reconstruct the country, promote better governance, administration, accountability, then the question is how does the way we conduct policy overall – and importantly, how we distribute our money – affect those objectives? It's also about what political allies we choose, but let's focus on just the money.

If you take account of all the money we spend, including for intelligence and military operations, for operations of our civilian staff, contracting and expenditures specifically categorized as reconstruction assistance, -- money that went to reconstruction assistance – no matter where it was spent – was always less than security-related costs. I don't know if there were any good governance programs for that military officer at Bagram. Of course the people working perimeter security are never thinking of governance; they had an operational problem and set about solving it with the resources available.

Intelligence operations: The intelligence community, in these operations, it does not have as its mission building good governance. The mission is 1) collecting information on our enemies, and 2) targeting operations on our enemies. So those goals often conflict with governance and/or anti-corruption.

USG walk-back from anti-corruption push

New Ansari: (b)(1) - 1.4(D)

(b)(1) - 1.4(D)

This led to a counter-narcotics policy of targeting major traffickers who help the Taliban. ...You have to pay whomever controls the territory you're going through. So we got a much more focused, but incoherent, approach.

USG has contributed to corruption; USG responses (Shafafiyat, law enforcement)

Military contracting: Here, some said HR McMaster was punished, being given the job [KB note: job as head of Task Force Shafafiyat].

I said to Holbrooke, do you know the main source of corruption in Afghanistan? Us. One thing is important for corruption – money. Who's dispensing the most money? Us. Why were the Taliban not corrupt? No money. Holbrooke eventually saw this, and tried to convince Mullen. Mullen eventually came around.

I don't know what happened with Shafafiyat. It was a noble experiment. (b)(1) - 1.4(D)



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Then there's the kind of corruption our government is very familiar with: double-billing, kickbacks, those kinds of things. The way we've tried to deal with it is to go through procedural reforms – set up the HOO, etc. But a law enforcement approach to corruption on this scale cannot possibly work. Law enforcement is designed to deal with deviant activities; it cannot possibly deal with this level of corruption, when it is pervasive in society.

A basic problem: suppose the Chinese government occupied the US to provide better governance – and educational system, etc – and had teams of people with \$10 trillion in cash, and none of those people spoke English. Would we be able to stop corruption? The money is too much. There's no way we can spend this money without people figuring out a way to get ahold of it. And people know it's temporary, so are going to try to get as much as possible. Even when we make a "firm commitment to stay" – you may deceive yourself, but you won't deceive them.

Early years: reconstruction narrative and Taliban resurgence

When Bush overthrew the Taliban, something had to be put in its place – so the US handed that job over to the UN. (b)(1) - 1.4(D) The political settlement and reconciliation was coordinated by the UN. US policy for 3-4 years was to do just humanitarian assistance. People were advocating for a "Marshall Plan."

The military on the ground realized they needed something to produce more benefit to the people. This led to PRTs. The compromise for an ISAF effect without ISAF was the PRTs. If you had ISAF, you needed money. Of course the military's thinking on reconstruction is they need to build people schools so they give you intelligence.

Presidential elections were the next kind of forcing of that [KB note: of the reconstruction mission], need to show something on reconstruction. US and Afghan elections were in coordination.

The next two years: the Taliban came back, 2004-06. Why?? We somehow came up with the explanation that it was drugs: the Taliban profit from drugs, and therefore drugs cause the Taliban. There was an NSC meeting where the key to the Taliban was presented as drugs. Also, the abuses of local powerbrokers were drugs. And the way to deal with that was eradication. This became the policy. But we were not paying much attention, never really got this policy off the ground. A lot of people were blaming Karzai. Bush would have VTCs with Karzai and be his friend.

Lute review

The Lute review found that:

- 1) There was no correspondence between what we said our goals were, and means we were allocating to achieve them.
- 2) Top leadership had really no idea about Afghanistan. (b)(5)

Technocrats in GIRA – (b)(1) - 1.4(D) was arguing for direct assistance to the government, but over-estimated the absorption capacity of the government and under-estimated the time it would take to do reconstruction.

Ambiguity of some forms of corruption

We need to abandon the assumption that the way things are done in Afghanistan is a problem we have to solve; it's not as if Afghanistan had deviated from a norm of an idealized vision of ourselves because of circumstances we can correct. Dealing with a state whose borders were drawn for the state to play a role in regional security. Since Afghanistan lost the option of conquering Pakistan and India, it had to get patronage from outside powers. No matter how well you manage money from outside powers, [that money] doesn't produce accountability to



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

taxpayers because there are no taxpayers. A government is set up to control territory and through an alliance between the government and outside powers. It's not set up to deliver services.

So how does that government deal with the local population? One way is through corruption. (b)(1) - 1.4(D), for example - he imposed illegal taxes, gave family contracts, etc - some money built villas but also went to roads, schools, etc. Certain kinds of corruption are a way of providing power to multiple actors. So when (b)(1) - 1.4(D) does that, and he's not contributing to the insurgency, we reward him, (b)(1) - 1.4(D)

Need for a political settlement

A major mistake we made was treating the Taliban the same as al Qaeda. Key Taliban leaders were interested in giving the new system a chance, but we didn't give them a chance. That doesn't mean that Pakistan wouldn't have done something [KB note: i.e., to undermine political reconciliation], but they would have had less to work with.

The civilian surge was meant as a substitute for a political settlement; this is the role it plays in COIN doctrine. And it couldn't work. There were internal problems and external problems, and both had to be addressed. Couldn't as long as we insisted that Taliban were terrorists like al Qaeda. As soon as the president gave the speech in 2009, (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) was called in.

See Josh Faust's Playboy article.

COIN doctrine

COIN is a colonial doctrine. It's the doctrine used by the French in Algeria and British in Malaysia. Are any of those countries in charge any more? Whenever you tell Americans to win hearts and minds for America, they end up winning hearts and minds for themselves, and creating constituencies dependent on them.

Kabul Bank

(b)(5)

(b)(1) - 1.4(D)

Biden-Petraeus Debate

(b)(5)

Our [KB note: SRAP's] argument was that we only have the insurgency because we don't have a political settlement. And if we don't address it, the military won't be able to.

There's virtually no evidence that the decapitation of terrorist organizations weakens them. Decapitation was relatively effective against al Qaeda - because it was an Arab organization based in Afghanistan, so it had no way of replacing its senior leaders. Did decapitation work with Pakistani Taliban? No. What seems to work is going in and massively destroying their sanctuaries. We never did that with the Afghan Taliban because we didn't want to invade Pakistan. There were people who wanted to invade Pakistan for force protection.

(b)(5)

Regional elements

The big shortcoming of the [Obama] administration was it never developed a strategic vision of what we were trying to achieve in the region other than no al Qaeda. [KB note: Afghan?] People are very puzzled by that. One



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

thing the [who?] think we should have done is stabilized the region by balancing power between India and Pakistan.

China has a big strategic vision for the region. We have the pivot to Asia, by withdrawing from the region that China's most interested in. There's an important potential benefit from investing in economy of Central Asia.

(b)(1) - 1.4(D)

Justice and corruption: impunity, transitional justice

Connection between justice and corruption. Impunity is the human rights equivalent of drone strikes – like the way you get human rights is arresting and punishing a few big people...that does not work. Rule of law and respect for human rights do not develop as soon as you arrest a few evil-doers; rather, it requires institutions. Look at 1978, or even 1928-29.

I've been asked re the UN report on (b)(1) - 1.4(D). You can't single out one individual in one ethnic group over 30 years – that won't be seen as justice. If you punish everyone, you're punishing the entire political class. There must be security and trust so they can discuss how they want to proceed.

I went to a Nowruz dinner with (b)(1) - 1.4(D) proposed a museum on Taliban atrocities. (b)(1) - 1.4(D) said, Taliban aren't the only ones. This is why releasing the mapping report at some point would be good.

Alternatives

We had a number of alternatives: (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

- 1) (b)(3)
- 2) Couldn't have Taliban at Bonn without ceasefires.
- 3) Could have had Taliban at Emergency Loya Jirga. Those six months were key – during which three key things were happening: Guantanamo; night raids; Bush's axis of evil speech.
- 4) Pursue opening with Iran, and integrate Taliban in Loya Jirga. That might have created a better security situation to do reconstruction. In retrospect, that seems the best alternative.

Taliban had no incentive to move away from AQ, after we said you are AQ.

Follow-up Items

See Josh Faust's Playboy article, recommended (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)